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Testimony in Support of LD 1454

"An Act Concerning Elections in Maine Congressional Districts"

Senator Lucchini, Representative Schneck, and distinguished members of the Committee on Veterans and Legal Affairs:

Good morning. I'm Representative Dick Bradstreet of House District 80, which is comprised of my home town of Vassalboro, Windsor, Somerville, the Unorganized Township of Hibberts Gore and part of Augusta. I'm here today to present to you LD 1454, *"An Act Concerning Elections in Maine Congressional Districts."*

I'm sponsoring this bill because of serious concerns that many voters have expressed to me about Ranked-Choice voting. We're all familiar with the controversy surrounding this issue ever since a people's referendum effort resulted in the implementation of Ranked-Choice Voting for Maine's two Congressional Districts. There is really no need here to debate its merits once again – that's not the purpose of this bill. What this proposal seeks to do is simply allow each of Maine's Congressional Districts to decide for itself whether or not it wants to retain Ranked-Choice elections.

Much of the input I have received on this issue centers on the contention that the voters of one Congressional District have unfairly imposed its will on the other. Indeed, voters of CD 1 voted strongly in favor of Ranked-Choice while the voters of CD 2 did not, but expressed the desire to continue to keep election victory by plurality voting, the way it's been done for decades. Yet the strength of the referendum results in CD 1 meant that the voters of CD 2 are now compelled to live with a method they perhaps do not want. There is a considerable amount of resentment among CD 2 Mainers that their opinions and values are being superseded by those of the more urban CD 1, and that it is simply not fair. I happen to live in CD 1, and yet I share that same view. It seems that the voters in each CD ought to be able to decide for themselves what type of voting system they desire. That's why I'm introducing this bill.

LD 1454 will simply allow the voters of each Congressional District to make their own choice as to which method they prefer, whether it is Ranked-Choice or Plurality voting. It calls for a referendum to be held in each Congressional District to make that choice. It is reasonable, it is fair, it is an effort to take as much "politics" out of the issue as possible, and it respects the rights of all Mainers regardless of where they may live in determining how their government should work. I hope the committee will have a robust discussion on LD 1454 and eventually give it a strong "Ought to Pass" vote.

Thank you for your time. I'll be happy to entertain any questions you may have.

Dick Bradstreet
State Representative